

2001

A Study to Determine What Factors Influence Students to Enroll at Mountain Empire Community College

Joseph Lincoln Young
Old Dominion University

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**A STUDY TO DETERMINE WHAT FACTORS INFLUENCE
STUDENTS TO ENROLL AT MOUNTAIN EMPIRE COMMUNITY
COLLEGE**


**A Research Paper
Presented to the Graduate Faculty
Of the Department of Occupational and Technical Studies
At Old Dominion University**

**In Partial Fulfillment
Of the Requirements for
The Master of Science Degree**

**By
Joseph Lincoln Young
February 2001**

APPROVAL PAGE

This research project was prepared by Joseph Lincoln Young under the direction of Dr. John Ritz in OTED 635 and 636. It was submitted to the Graduate Program Director as partial fulfillment of the requirements for Master of Science Degree in Occupational and Technical Studies.

APPROVAL BY:  4-3-01
Dr. John Ritz
Advisor and Graduate
Program Director
Date

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Joseph L. Young

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

It is important that Mountain Empire Community College offer potential students many reasons to attend the two-year college that is in their region. Many educational institutions have different strategies for recruiting students to enroll at their institution. What factors help influence a wide range of students to enroll at Mountain Empire Community College?

According to U.S. News and World Report (1993), “Students in a variety of circumstances are finding that a community college makes sense for them. The rising reputation of the community college is leading many students who might have headed straight to a four-year college to take a second look” (p.126).

Administrators need to know why recent high school graduates enroll at Mountain Empire instead of attending other local four-year colleges. What persuades men and women to enroll in classes at Mountain Empire Community College after several years of raising a family or working outside the home? Why do students attend another college, then transfer to Mountain Empire Community College? Once these questions are answered, this small community college, located in Big Stone Gap, Virginia, will be

able to improve its recruitment efforts to enable more students to take advantage of continuing their education at Mountain Empire Community College.

Statement of the Problem

The problem of this study was to determine what factors influence students to enroll at Mountain Empire Community College.

Research Goals

The specific research goals designed to answer this problem included:

1. Identify why traditional students enroll at Mountain Empire Community College.
2. Identify why nontraditional students enroll at Mountain Empire Community College.
3. Identify why students transfer to Mountain Empire Community College after attending another college.
4. Make recommendations on advertising the attributes of an education from Mountain Empire Community College.

Background and Significance

It is important that Mountain Empire Community College offer the people in Wise, Scott, and Lee Counties, the City of Norton, and the town of Clintwood the opportunity to obtain a quality education and jobs within the areas that they live. In an article published in 1994, Kathleen Kennedy Manzo said, “Mountain Empire Community College in Big Stone Gap, Virginia, provides higher education to victims of the region’s declining mining industry to increase their job-seeking potential by learning important skills (Manzo, 1994, p.18).

Several students that first attended Mountain Empire Community College are also the first persons in their families to attend college. They grew up in a community, which depended solely on their knowledge of mining and tobacco-growing skills for a living. Students, however, are growing up in a new community and society that now requires them to be educated with technology-based skills in other diverse fields such as nursing and criminal corrections. Learning how to recruit potential students to be trained and educated will not only help the student obtain better jobs, but also help the community to grow economically.

Limitations

This study was limited to first-time students that were enrolled at Mountain Empire Community College during the Fall Semester 2000. Students included in this study were completing at least three credits of instruction. Results of this study may be affected based on the background and past history of each student responding to the study.

Assumptions

The basic assumptions of this study were as follows:

1. Higher education will better prepare people for the local employment market.
2. The changing demographics of the region require people to gain new skills for employment.
3. An individual who grows and matures in a region selects to continue to live in that region.

Procedures

A survey was developed and administered to students on campus at Mountain Empire Community College several times during the Fall Semester 2000. These were collected on site. The instrument used questions to gather specific information for the college. The survey was tabulated to determine why students elected to attend Mountain Empire Community College.

Definition of Terms

There were several terms that may not be interpreted the same by each reader. Therefore, these terms have been defined for the purpose of this study.

Enrolled – to register for at least three credits or more during the Fall 2000 Semester.

Traditional Students – someone who has recently graduated from high school and then enrolled at Mountain Empire Community College the following semester after graduation from high school. The age of this student usually ranges from 17 to 21.

Nontraditional students - are individuals who do not conform to the profile of the traditional 17 to 21 year-old student who enrolls full-time at a community college, completes the freshman and sophomore

years, and transfers to a four-year college to earn a baccalaureate degree.

Transfer Students – a person who changes from one college to another college.

Financial Aid – monetary assistance awarded to students to help pay for the cost of books and tuition.

Summary

The researcher, in this chapter, has attempted to demonstrate the need to assess student opinion on what factors help influence them to enroll at Mountain Empire Community College. The researcher feels this study is important to help the college in attracting students and increasing enrollment.

Chapter II reviews the literature previously researched on the subject of why students enroll in a community college. Chapter III describes the methods and procedures for collecting data, including the subjects surveyed, design of the questionnaire, and when and where the instrument was administered. Chapter IV presents the data collected, and Chapter V is devoted to the summary, conclusions, and recommendations achieved as a result of the study.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The problem of this study was to determine what factors influence students to enroll at Mountain Empire Community College. The study was based upon students' opinions of why they are enrolled in classes by means of a survey questionnaire. Emphasis is placed on why traditional, nontraditional, and transfer students chose to attend Mountain Empire Community College instead of working in the workforce or attending a four-year college. Included in this chapter will be sections on History of Mountain Empire Community College, Recruiting Traditional Students, Entering the Workforce or Going to College, The Transfer Student, and Summary.

History of Mountain Empire Community College

In Southwest Virginia, a committee comprised of local business, civic, industrial and political leaders was appointed by the local governing bodies of Lee, Scott, Wise, and Dickenson Counties and the City of Norton for the purpose of establishing a comprehensive community college. In April of

1970, the Mountain Empire Community College Board had its first meeting at which Judge William C. Fugate was elected chair. The State Board for Community Colleges allocated funds for construction, and construction began in early 1971.

According to the current President, Dr. Robert Sandel, “Mountain Empire Community College’s vision is being student focused -- providing an atmosphere of caring and commitment where student aspirations, goals, high standards, and the fullest potential for life are developed and nurtured through instruction, advisement, and support services. MECC possess a collaborative relationship with our public schools so that students come academically prepared, with well-defined goals, and committed to their college work (2000). ”

Recruiting Traditional Students

Enticing academically gifted students from the high school talent pool is not as easy as it used to be. The days when a college recruiter for a community college could simply arrive at the school and give a sign-up sheet to anyone who wanted to enroll in classes are long gone. In the current competitive college environment, the top students often have made their

choice of college by their senior year and narrowed their search by the time they are juniors, according to Jeffords and Scheidt (2000). So how can a small community college persuade students to enroll?

One tactic for recruiting from among high school juniors and seniors is to develop a working relationship with a student as early as possible. The sophomore year is not too soon. An ongoing program such as Educational Talent Search can help students obtain a rapport with a community college early in their school career. Representatives go early to the school campuses and meet with sophomores and freshmen and discuss their goals. They explain what the college can offer and, perhaps most important, what an education can do for them (Jeffords & Scheidt, 2000, p. 49).

According to the Director of Educational Talent Search, Ms. Regina Massey (2000), "Educational Talent Search is a Federal TRIO program whose purpose is to help students define educational and career goals. Services are available to youth between 12 and 18 years of age. The program is especially designed for students of families with low incomes or students whose parents have not received a four-year college degree."

Malveauz (2000) notes that while many high school seniors have made a commitment to go to college, some seniors just want to make it through high school and get a job. All too often, something has turned them

off from the educational system. Unfortunately, the disease of educational malaise and indifference is striking students at younger and younger ages. Educators who care about higher education need to work much harder to make the connection between K-12 education and higher education. These young students who get turned off by education will not be attending college, much less graduating.

Often, the focus of the community college system is only on admissions of students wishing to apply for college. However, community colleges must not ignore the high school seniors who have turned off from getting a post-high school degree. They must focus on what factors can help influence these students to take a second look at higher education (Malveaux, 2000, p. 96).

However, what about the average high school senior who wants to go to college, but lacks direction? Outside consulting companies are helping colleges target the students who need some direction by using information technology to obtain needed data. Recruiters review demographics and financial-aid plans to identify what factors help influence these students to enroll. The process provides institutions with recruitment strategies that incorporate specific missions and objectives.

From this review of literature on traditional students, it can be seen that they make their decisions about going to college during the first couple of years of high school. Colleges will most likely have more traditional students enroll if they develop a working relationship with students as early as possible.

Entering the Workforce or to Go to College

A strong economy can mean bad news for community colleges. Even slight improvements to the economy are good for most businesses, but not for the nation's community colleges. However, most community colleges have a growth increase of nontraditional students when a factory closes its doors or when the economy is slow (Hedden, 1996, p.13).

Many unemployed adults will attend a community college to learn new trade skills to help them obtain a better job. Adults are quickly finding out that the jobs of the 21st century increasingly require more education and preparation. The trend of working adults going back to college is quickly becoming common.

Some adults are going to college simply because they must get education to survive in the workforce. Then, there are people like Rosa

Jones. She is a woman who simply has a thirst for education, a hunger to know more, and is prepared to do whatever she must do to quench the thirst. Jones, who at age 72 received a Bachelor of Science degree in interdisciplinary studies from Norfolk State University in December 1999, is an example of a non-traditional student. She did not have to go to college because she wanted to get a better job. She did it because she simply wanted to say she earned a college degree (Malveaux, 2000, p. 96).

The report (1999) entitled, "Community College Reverse Transfer Students: A Field Survey of a Nontraditional Student Group," researched nontraditional students from the University of Kentucky Community College System. Highlights of this report included the following:

1. The mean age for students increased from 27 in 1980 to more than 31 by 1993 as large numbers of adult learners returned to college to acquire and upgrade skills.
2. Females, many of whom attend college part-time, did not equal males in enrollment until 1978 but outnumbered males (55% to 45%) by 1991.
3. Part-time students, most of whom are members of one or more nontraditional groups, increased from 49% of the student population in 1970 to more than 65% of the population by 1992.

From this review of literature on nontraditional students, it can be seen that the adult student will attend a college for different reasons. Some adult students go to college to learn new skills to help obtain a job, while

other adult students go to school simply because they have a desire to obtain an education.

The Transfer Student

Many four-year colleges are looking for individuals who plan to enroll full-time at a community college, complete the freshman and sophomore years, and transfer to a four-year college to earn a baccalaureate degree. Several community colleges have reached formal agreements with public universities within the same state. This will allow local community college students to transfer a certain number of credits toward earning a baccalaureate degree. Such pacts, known as articulation agreements, have helped both the community college and universities recruit qualified transfer students.

Davies and Casey (1999) state that students have often found out that the academic experience is different at a two-year community college compared to a four-year college. The biggest change is the focus on classroom experiences, which include the levels of individual attention students receive, the amount of interaction with faculty and staff, the quality of learning experiences, and coursework difficulty.

Student perceptions of faculty and advising at the community college are primarily positive. Hughes and Graham (1992) found faculty to be interested in students and available to them outside classes. These students also perceived that academic advising was somewhat complete and accurate. Pincus and Archer (1989) reported that student experiences with counselors were similar at the community college and the university, while students viewed instructors at four-year institutions as being less helpful than community college instructors (Davies and Casey, 1999, p. 60).

The report (1999) title, "Transfer Student Experiences" included comments about student's comfort level on their community college campuses. Some students experienced such a great comfort that, "If it was a four-year school, they'd still be there" (p. 63). When comparing community college experiences to those of the university, one student described the former as, "Much more fun, much more relaxed, more comfortable" (p. 63). Students also found comfort in convenient parking and campus accessibility. "I like the fact that you can park so close to your classes. That was good. At the community college there were three buildings ... Everything was right there" (p. 63).

Other students claimed individual interaction was a clear advantage of the community college. They were able to get to know counselors,

instructors, and other students on a personal level. One student noted, "I got to know one of the counselors really well, just because it was such a small community college" (p. 63). Another reported, "I had a better GPA ... because of more one-on-one situations, and more comfort" (p. 63). Some students said that the high level of interaction among students and faculty at community colleges made their experiences better and was key to academic success: "... there was a lot more interaction with the instructor ... it was just more interesting" (p. 63).

One student talked about preparing to leave the university and go back to his community college. "It is just so different at a community college. I'm going to be really sad to leave this university, but not so far as the academics are concerned.... I'm looking forward to going back to my community college and getting that type of one-on-one interaction. I learned so much more" (p. 63).

Many individuals plan to enroll full-time at a community college, complete the freshman and sophomore years, and transfer to a four-year college. Most transfer students usually do not set goals to transfer from a four-year college to a community college. However, several students have found out they are not ready to meet the challenge at a four-year college because of individual attention students receive, the amount of interaction

with faculty and staff, and the quality of learning experiences that are received at a community college (Davies and Casey, 1999, p. 60).

From this review of literature on transfer students, it can be seen that there was a different level of focus on individual attention students received from community college compared to a four-year college. Many students made statements about how a community college was more comfortable and relaxed. However, the biggest reason most students transferred to a community college was the individual interaction within the classroom.

Summary

The review of literature has presented an overview of material associated with the research goals of this study. In terms of attracting traditional students, a community college should establish an early relationship with high school students. In terms of attracting non-traditional students, a community college should promote programs to help adult students learn job skills. A community college must remain sensitive to fluctuations in the economy in order to offer needed programs. A community college should realize one of its major strengths lies in the quality of the academic experience it can provide students and should center

its marketing around access to faculty and individualized attention offered in smaller classes.

Chapter III will outline the Methods and Procedures used by the researcher. It will include Population, Instrument Design, Data Collection Procedures, and Statistical Analysis.

CHAPTER III

METHODS AND PROCEDURES

The purpose of this chapter is to explain the procedure used to design and administer the survey instruments used in this study. Topics addressed in Chapter III are population, instrument design, methods of data collection, and statistical analysis.

Population

The sample population for this study was comprised of students attending Mountain Empire Community College during the Fall Semester of 2000. Students included in this study were completing at least three credits of instruction. Two hundred out of five hundred and forty-four students were chosen at random to participate in this study from English, Biology, Math, Student Development, Information Systems Technology, and Psychology classes. These classes were chosen in order to reach a wide range of students with different backgrounds.

Instrument Design

The instrument was designed based on interviews with experts and was developed to address to the goals of this research. The instrument was an inventory set up on a Likert response scale, using a highly favorable rating of five (5) and a least favorable response of (1), to questions that specifically relate to the research goals. The instrument design did not provide a comment area. The instrument was one page in length. The instrument design length was deliberate on the part of the researcher to facilitate completion and return during the provided class time (see Appendix A).

Data Collection Procedures

After making prior arrangements with the Dean of Academic and Student Services and instructors at Mountain Empire Community College, the researcher made initial contact with the respondents in person during class. The survey was distributed by hand to each student who was attending classes that day. An explanation was given in a cover letter (see Appendix B) as to the purpose of the survey and they were asked to fill out

and return the survey immediately. After the surveys were returned, the researcher assembled the data collected.

Statistical Analysis

Survey data was compiled by the researcher so that finding as to why students enroll at Mountain Empire Community College could be reported in Chapter IV. Data was categorized and then analyzed using means. Responses were arranged into a frequency distribution from which a mean score was determined for each question.

Summary

This chapter has dealt with the methods and procedures used to conduct this study. Selections of the sample population were outlined. Instrument design was reviewed. Finally, data collection and statistical analysis were discussed. In Chapter IV, the researcher will report the findings of this study.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS

The problem of this study was to determine what factors influence students to enroll at Mountain Empire Community College. This chapter contains the results of data collected from the survey instrument. The data was used to determine what factors had an impact on the reasons students enrolled at Mountain Empire Community College.

SURVEY RESPONSE

One-hundred forty-four out of two-hundred surveys were returned which resulted in an 72.5 percent return rate. The subjects were asked to respond to each question according to a value scale of 1-5 with 1 assigned a low or least favorable rating and 5 assigned a high or most favorable rating. The responses were then calculated to determine the mean rating for each response.

DATA ANALYSIS

Following is a report on each question administered through the survey. Students were asked to rate how strongly each question influenced them to attend Mountain Empire Community College. Data from the questions is reported in Table 1.

The first question on the survey instrument, “Close to home,” had a mean of 3.78 based on 144 responses from all students. This indicates a favorable response. Traditional students had a mean of 3.79 based on 120 responses, which indicates a favorable response. Non-traditional students had a mean of 3.76 based on 24 responses, indicating a favorable response. Transfer students had a mean of 3.56 based on 23 responses. This indicates a favorable response.

The second question on the survey instrument, “Financial aid was available,” had a mean of 3.79 based on 144 responses from all students. This indicates a favorable response. Traditional students had a mean of 3.68 based on 120 responses, which indicates a favorable response. Non-traditional students had a mean of 4.36 based on 24 responses, indicating a highly favorable response. Transfer students had a mean of 3.35 based on 23 responses. This indicates a neutral response.

Factors Influence Students to Enroll at Mountain Empire Community College

<u>Item</u> <u>Number</u>	<u>Item</u>	<u>Means</u> <u>ALL</u>	<u>Means</u> <u>Traditional</u>	<u>Means</u> <u>Non-Traditional</u>	<u>Means</u> <u>Transfer</u>
1	Close to Home	3.78	3.79	3.76	3.57
2	Financial Aid was available	3.79	3.68	4.36	3.35
3	Low tuition cost at MECC compared to other colleges	4.12	4.18	3.8	4.22
4	Your friends are attending MECC	2.73	2.89	1.9	2.17
5	Family members attended MECC	1.7	1.6	2.2	1.74
6	Your program of study was available at MECC	3.31	3.09	4.4	3.65
7	Heard MECC has quality academic programs	2.92	2.85	3.24	3
8	Because students received individual attention from instructors at MECC	3.24	3.23	3.28	3.17
9	MECC has smaller class sizes	3.4	3.37	3.56	3.13
10	Flexible class schedule	2.85	3.81	4.04	3.39
11	MECC recruiter visited the high school	2.78	3.07	1.36	1.87
12	You received a class schedule in the mail	2.6	2.59	2.64	2.35
13	You visited the MECC campus	2.6	2.7	2.08	2
14	You saw an MECC billboard	2.01	2.08	1.64	1.39

*Number of Responses

All 144

Traditional 120

Non-Traditional 24

Transfer 23

The third question on the survey instrument, “Low tuition cost at MECC compared to other colleges,” had a mean of 4.12 based on 144 responses from all students. This indicates a highly favorable response. Traditional students had a mean of 4.18 based on 120 responses, which indicates a highly favorable response. Non-traditional students had a mean of 3.80 based on 24 responses, indicating a favorable response. Transfer students had a mean of 4.22 based on 23 responses. This indicates a highly favorable response.

The fourth question on the survey instrument, “Your friends are attending MECC,” had a mean of 2.73 based on 144 responses from all students. This indicates a least favorable response. Traditional students had a mean of 2.89 based on 120 responses, which indicates a least favorable response. Non-traditional students had a mean of 1.90 based on 24 responses, indicating a least favorable response. Transfer students had a mean of 2.17 based on 23 responses. This indicates a least favorable response.

The fifth question on the survey instrument, “Family members attended MECC,” had a mean of 1.70 based on 144 responses from all students. This indicates a least favorable response. Traditional students had a mean of 1.60 based on 120 responses, which indicates a least favorable

response. Non-traditional students had a mean of 2.20 based on 24 responses, indicating a least favorable response. Transfer students had a mean of 1.74 based on 23 responses. This indicates a least favorable response.

The sixth question on the survey instrument, “Your program of study was available at MECC,” had a mean of 3.31 based on 144 responses from all students. This indicates a neutral response. Traditional students had a mean of 3.09 based on 120 responses, which indicates a neutral response. Non-traditional students had a mean of 4.40 based on 24 responses, indicating a highly favorable response. Transfer students had a mean of 3.65 based on 23 responses. This indicates a favorable response.

The seventh question on the survey instrument, “Heard MECC has quality academic programs,” had a mean of 2.92 based on 144 responses from all students. This indicates a neutral response. Traditional students had a mean of 2.85 based on 120 responses, which indicates a neutral response. Non-traditional students had a mean of 3.24 based on 24 responses, indicating a neutral response. Transfer students had a mean of 3.00 based on 23 responses. This indicates a neutral response.

The eighth question on the survey instrument, “Because students receive individual attention from instructors at MECC,” had a mean of 3.24

based on 144 responses from all students. This indicates a neutral response. Traditional students had a mean of 3.23 based on 120 responses, which indicates a neutral response. Non-traditional students had a mean of 3.28 based on 24 responses, indicating a neutral response. Transfer students had a mean of 3.17 based on 23 responses. This indicates a neutral response.

The ninth question on the survey instrument, “MECC has smaller class sizes,” had a mean of 3.40 based on 144 responses from all students. This indicates a neutral response. Traditional students had a mean of 3.37 based on 120 responses, which indicates a neutral response. Non-traditional students had a mean of 3.56 based on 24 responses, indicating a favorable response. Transfer students had a mean of 3.13 based on 23 responses. This indicates a neutral response.

The tenth question on the survey instrument, “Flexible class schedule,” had a mean of 3.78 based on 144 responses from all students. This indicates a favorable response. Traditional students had a mean of 3.79 based on 120 responses, which indicates a favorable response. Non-traditional students had a mean of 3.76 based on 24 responses, indicating a favorable response. Transfer students had a mean of 3.56 based on 23 responses. This indicates a favorable response.

The eleventh question on the survey instrument, “MECC recruiter visited the high school,” had a mean of 2.78 based on 144 responses from all students. This indicates a neutral response. Traditional students had a mean of 3.07 based on 120 responses, which indicates a neutral response. Non-traditional students had a mean of 1.36 based on 24 responses, indicating a least favorable response. Transfer students had a mean of 1.87 based on 23 responses. This indicates a least favorable response.

The twelfth question on the survey instrument, “You received a class schedule in the mail,” had a mean of 2.60 based on 144 responses from all students. This indicates a neutral response. Traditional students had a mean of 2.59 based on 120 responses, which indicates a neutral response. Non-traditional students had a mean of 2.64 based on 24 responses, indicating a neutral response. Transfer students had a mean of 2.35 based on 23 responses. This indicates a least favorable response.

The thirteenth question on the survey instrument, “You visited the Mountain Empire Community College campus,” had a mean of 2.60 based on 144 responses from all students. This indicates a neutral response. Traditional students had a mean of 2.70 based on 120 responses, which indicates a neutral response. Non-traditional students had a mean of 2.08 based on 24 responses, indicating a least favorable response. Transfer

students had a mean of 2.00 based on 23 responses. This indicates a least favorable response.

The fourteenth question on the survey instrument, “You saw an Mountain Empire Community College billboard,” had a mean of 2.01 based on 144 responses from all students. This indicates a least favorable response. Traditional students had a mean of 2.08 based on 120 responses, which indicates a least favorable response. Non-traditional students had a mean of 1.64 based on 24 responses, indicating a least favorable response. Transfer students had a mean of 1.39 based on 23 responses. This indicates a least favorable response.

SUMMARY

Chapter IV provides the results of the survey administered to answer the research goals. One-hundred forty-four of two-hundred students responded to the survey for a 72.5 percent response rate. The survey was then analyzed to determine the mean based on a Likert scale for each question. Chapter V will provide the Summary, Conclusions, and Recommendations of the study.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The problem of this study was to determine what factors influence students to enroll at Mountain Empire Community College. This chapter summarizes the procedures used in this research, draws conclusions about the findings of the study, and makes recommendations based on these research findings.

SUMMARY

It is impossible for a community college or university to be successful without obtaining students. Over the last twenty-eight years, Mountain Empire Community College has been successful in obtaining students to enroll in classes at this local community college. However, the decline in the population and change in the economy throughout the region have made recruitment efforts the key issue for Mountain Empire Community College in obtaining traditional, nontraditional, and transfer students.

Administrators have stated that recruitment efforts can be more effective if they know why some students enroll at Mountain Empire

Community College, while others do not. The college may then be better prepared to develop different strategies toward obtaining a wider range of students in the future.

A survey instrument was developed to determine what factors influence students to enroll at Mountain Empire Community College. The survey was developed and administered to students on campus several times during the Fall Semester 2000. One-hundred forty-four participants responded out of two-hundred surveys distributed which resulted in an 72.5 percent return rate.

CONCLUSIONS

Several significant conclusions can be made based on the stated research goals.

1. Identify why traditional students enroll at Mountain Empire Community College.

It is the conclusion of this study that a majority of traditional students enroll at Mountain Empire Community College because of the low tuition cost compared to other colleges (4.18). Other reasons are that financial aid was available (3.68), the college was close to home (3.79), the class

schedule was flexible (3.81), and class sizes were smaller than at bigger four-year colleges (3.37). However, the traditional students did not stress factors such as program of study (3.09) and quality academic programs (2.85).

2. Identify why nontraditional students enroll at Mountain Empire Community College.

It is the conclusion of this study that a majority of nontraditional students enrolled at Mountain Empire Community College because the student's program of study was available (4.40). Other reasons are availability of financial aid (4.36), flexible class schedule (4.04), and low tuition (3.80). However, individual attention from instructors (3.28) and quality academic programs (3.24) were not stressed as factors for the nontraditional students.

3. Identify why students transfer to Mountain Empire Community College after attending another college.

The study concluded that a majority of transfer students enroll at Mountain Empire Community College because of the low tuition cost compare to other colleges (4.22). Other reasons are because the college was close to home (3.57) and his or her program of study was available (3.65). However, factors such as individual attention from instructors (3.17),

smaller class sizes (3.13), financial aid (3.35), and quality academic programs (3.00) were not factors for students transferring from other colleges to Mountain Empire Community College.

4. Make recommendations on advertising the attributes of an education from Mountain Empire Community College.

The study concluded that a majority of all students do not enroll at Mountain Empire Community College because of advertisements on billboards (2.01) or class schedules that are mailed to the local residents (2.60). However, the study showed that some traditional students are influenced to attend Mountain Empire Community College because of the recruitment efforts from recruiters visiting the local high schools (3.07).

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the result, observations, and conclusions of this research, the following recommendations are submitted.

1. Advertise in the newspapers and on local television channels the advantages of attending a college with smaller class sizes.
2. Advertise the advantages of attending a college where the students will receive individual attention from instructors.

3. Send an annual newsletter to all alumni to keep them up to date on the latest academic programs and training available at Mountain Empire Community College.
4. Conduct a survey of local businesses, instructors, administrators, and students to learn what new academic programs, training, and workshops should be offered within the near future.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A – Survey of why students enroll at Mountain Empire
Community College

APPENDIX B – Sample of Cover Letter

SURVEY of why students enroll at MECC

Please complete this assessment form using a #2 pencil.

The purpose of this study is to determine what factors influenced YOU to enroll at Mountain Empire Community College. This survey is for an research project for Joseph Young. Thank you for being honest and for your help.

4. What year did you graduate from high school?

1. Age

2. First Semester Enrolled at MECC

☐ **Fall 2000**



☐ Other

3. Have you every attended another college?

☐ Yes☐ **No**

① ②



5 5

5 5

⑧ ⑨
⑩ ⑪

99

For each item listed, rate how strongly it influenced you to attend Mountain Empire Community College.

Directions: Please respond to the following statements by coloring in the most appropriate number. One indicates a low or least favorable rating and 5 represents the highest or most favorable rating.

Close to Home

 Financial Aid was available

①②③④⑤ Low Tuition Cost at MECC compared to other colleges

4245 Your friends are attending MECC

Family members attended MECC

12345 Your program of study was available at MECC

1 2 3 4 5 Heard MECC has quality Academic Programs

① ② ③ ④ ⑤ Because students receive individual attention from instructors at MECC

MECC has smaller class sizes

①②③④⑤ Flexible class schedule

MECC Recruiter visited the high school

12345 You received a class schedule in the mail

 You visited the MECC campus

①②③④⑤ You saw an MECC billboard

November 1, 2000

Dear Student,

You have been selected to participate in a study to determine what factors influenced you to enroll at Mountain Empire Community College. The survey should take only a few minutes to complete.

Your participation and cooperation is appreciated. All responses are of the utmost importance to the outcome of this research. Please consider each question carefully to determine what influenced you to attend Mountain Empire Community College. Your answers will remain anonymous.

When completed, please return the survey to your instructor. Thank you for your cooperation and participation in this valuable survey.

Sincerely,

Joseph Young
Programmer Analyst